



1201 16th St., N.W. | Washington, DC 20036 | Phone: (202) 833-4000

Lily Eskelsen García
President

Rebecca S. Pringle
Vice President

Princess R. Moss
Secretary-Treasurer

John C. Stocks
Executive Director

July 6, 2016

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Education and the Workforce
Washington, DC 205151

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the three million members of the National Education Association and the students they serve, we urge you to vote YES on the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (H.R. 5587), which is scheduled to be marked up tomorrow. We applaud the Committee for producing a bipartisan bill that updates career and technical education (CTE) for schools and students across the country. Votes associated with this issue may be included in the NEA Legislative Report Card for the 114th Congress.

Federal support for CTE is vitally important. It helps ensure that all students, no matter what zip code they live in, have access to high-quality CTE programs and that states have the means to strengthen those programs. For secondary students, CTE provides engaging, relevant, and hands-on learning opportunities that lead to higher graduation rates and a range of post-secondary education and career options. For post-secondary students, CTE provides preparation for careers as well as opportunities to attain degrees and other credentials.

H.R. 5587 reflects many of NEA's key principles and recommendations to Congress for CTE reauthorization. Among them:

- **Involving educators in decision-making.** H.R. 5587 recognizes and includes educators in CTE planning and decision-making. This approach strengthens collaboration among the education, business, labor, employment, and economic sectors; improves program effectiveness; and helps ensure that the needs of both students and employers are met. Including CTE educators in decision-making at many levels is further insurance that CTE students' needs are well-represented.
- **Preparing educators to address the needs of all students.** Excellent CTE programs that meet students' needs require a strong pipeline of quality, credentialed, and experienced educators. We appreciate that the bill addresses the need for CTE instructors to receive appropriate training in pedagogical practices, including professional development geared to serving under-represented students—specifically, English-language learners and students with special needs. We also appreciate that the bill provides for early exploration of CTE programs, including support and counseling to help middle school students understand a variety of career possibilities and pathways for getting there.

- **Addressing skills gaps.** Education and training supported by federal career and technical education programs are vital to addressing gaps in workers' skills and employers' needs. Employers across the nation continue to stress the need for well-trained workers. H.R. 5587 seeks to align CTE programs and in-demand industries while allowing local programs flexibility to address local labor market needs.

While we remain concerned that language regarding maintenance of state funding efforts could lead to some loss of resources for students and schools, we appreciate the Committee's attempt to limit this possibility over the long term. We are also concerned that as part of national activities, H.R. 5587 creates a competitive innovation grant fund—an approach that could undercut research and technical assistance that can help career and technical educators improve their practice.

We look forward to working with the Committee to strengthen this legislation as it moves forward. We thank the Committee for taking a bipartisan approach to CTE reauthorization and urge you to vote YES on H.R. 5587.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mary Kusler".

Mary Kusler
Director of Government Relations